



The Sixty-eighth Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lammot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art
2,778th Concert

Dan Franklin Smith, pianist

March 21, 2010
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849)

Barcarolle in F-sharp Major, op. 60 (1847)

Grande Valse brillante in E-flat Major, op. 18 (1840)

Grande Valse in A-flat Major, op. 42 (1840)

Impromptu in G-flat Major, op. 51 (1842)

Mazurka in E Major, op. 6, no. 3 (1830–1832)

Mazurka in D-flat Major, op. 30, no. 3 (1837)

Mazurka in A-flat Major, op. 59, no. 2 (1845)

Ballade no. 1 in G Minor, op. 23 (1835)

INTERMISSION

George Gershwin (1898–1937)

Novelette in Fourths

Three Preludes

Two Song Transcriptions

“Fascinatin’ Rhythm”

“I Got Rhythm”

Aaron Copland (1900–1990)

Sentimental Melody; Blues; Midsummer Nocturne

Dave Brubeck (b. 1920)

Blue Rondo a la Turk

André Previn (b. 1929)

Three South American Sketches

The Musician

A resident of New York City, Dan Franklin Smith performs at colleges, universities, museums, and concert halls throughout the United States and Europe. He graduated from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor and made his European recital debut in 1997 in Sweden, where he received a standing ovation and rave reviews. The following year he made his European orchestral debut in Stockholm and was later featured on Swedish television. A debut recording with the Gävle Symfoniorkester and a recording with the Stuttgart Philharmonic Orchestra soon followed. These premier recordings received outstanding reviews and continue to be broadcast on classical music radio stations.

Smith has received high praise from German publications including the *Coburger Tageblatt* and Munich's *Die Neue Presse*, *Münchener Merkur*, and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. His European engagements have included appearances in Bernried, Coswig, Dessau, Leipzig, and Wittenberg in Germany, as well as engagements in London, Oslo, Paris, and various cities in Sweden. Later this year he will appear at the Bruckner Festival in Linz, Austria.

As a chamber musician and vocal accompanist, Smith has performed at venues such as Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center in New York City and the Cleveland Museum's Distinguished Artist Series, as well as tours in Bermuda, Puerto Rico, and Taiwan. He is the recipient of a Performing Artist Grant from the American-Scandinavian Foundation of New York City. A member of the Recording Society as well as the American Matthay Association, he frequently performs at their yearly conferences. Music director and recital soloist with the international festival Elysium: Between Two Continents, Smith appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Stephanie Low Artists, Inc., of New York City.

Program Notes

This year marks the 200th anniversary of Frédéric Chopin's birth. Born in 1810 on either February 22 (as recorded in the city records) or March 1 (as regularly reported by Chopin himself), Chopin is considered to be one of the greatest artists in the history of Polish culture. A composer of international standing in his own lifetime, he was a cultural ambassador for the folk music of Poland and played an exceptional role in shaping the country's national identity. Chopin holds the distinction of being the composer whose works are most often played on the concert stage. As a composer, he favored ballades, études, mazurkas, preludes, and waltzes, but he also wrote pieces that do not fall into any of these categories. In his remarkable *Barcarolle in F-sharp Major*, the composer eschews the 6/8 time signature that is the hallmark of the Venetian gondoliers' songs that inspired the genre. Instead of the shorter phrase line associated with that meter, Chopin employs the compound meter of 12/8, producing a depth and breadth of melodic line that transcends the Venetian original. After a three-bar introduction, the piano presents a song that is both a lovelorn lament and a comforting lullaby.

In 1829 Chopin heard in the salons of Vienna the waltzes of Johann Strauss (1804–1849) and Joseph Lanner (1801–1843), in addition to familiar waltzes from operas. These works, so popular among the Viennese, did not arouse Chopin's interest or win his enthusiasm. In a letter to his father from October 1829, Chopin expressed his disappointment: "I have absorbed nothing of a Viennese nature; consequently, I am unable to play waltzes." Ironically, his first waltz was written shortly after he wrote to his father. Robert Schumann (1810–1856) praised all fourteen of Chopin's waltzes as being "of a different character from ordinary waltzes...bearing the unmistakable mark that only a Chopin could give them."

In contrast to his waltzes, Chopin's mazurkas stand out for their compactness, variety, and strong patriotic overtones. Originally a Polish dance of heroic cast, the mazurka has a basic triple rhythm with the principal accent on the second or the third beat of the measure. Some of the

earlier mazurkas are straightforward dances, but the later ones reach the level of musical poems, reflecting on the full range of human emotions from sheer happiness to utter despair.

Each of Chopin's four ballades had its inspiration in the poetry of his compatriot Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855). Although Chopin did not make reference to any specific poetic ballad for his *Ballade in G Minor*, op. 23, many Chopin scholars agree that the story he must have had in mind is Mickiewicz' *Konrad Wallenrod*, which tells of a Lithuanian prince who is captured as a boy and adopted by a knight of the Red Cross in the late fourteenth century. The boy subsequently escapes to his native land, only to find himself sent back among the enemy knights as a spy. He dies tragically, committing suicide in despair after being charged with treason. The ballade begins with an introduction marked *largo* that serves the same function as the storyteller's introduction, "Once upon a time, long ago..." This seven-bar introduction gives way to an ongoing narrative that is deeply passionate, even though its tempo marking is *moderato* (moderately). The same scholars maintain that Chopin is here identifying with the homesickness of the young prince in exile in the story. A brief reprieve from the intensity is followed by a capricious waltz-like passage. After a return of the opening statement, the ballade closes with a coda of ferocious scales and octaves.

For the second part of this evening's program, Dan Franklin Smith turns to the music of twentieth-century American composers. George Gershwin was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, where he had the opportunity to study piano with the highly respected Australian pianist and teacher Ernest Hutcheson (1871–1951). The bulk of Gershwin's musical education came, however, from the music halls and jazz clubs in which he collaborated with other musicians as a jazz performer. He was the first true "cross-over" composer, able to blend elements from his classical and jazz experience into a unified and transcendent whole.

Aaron Copland, also Brooklyn-born, committed his musical career to the furtherance of what he called the "nascent American school of music," which he saw as founded on a solid American musical tradition. As an educator, he encouraged his younger contemporaries to join him in looking

to their American roots for inspiration and incorporating the distinctive sounds of American folk and patriotic music into their works. Appropriately, he has been dubbed the “dean of twentieth-century American composers.”

Jazz composer, pianist, and bandleader Dave Brubeck received early training in classical music from his mother, who was a pianist. By age thirteen he was performing professionally with local jazz groups. He was a music major at the College of the Pacific in Stockton, California, and studied composition with Darius Milhaud in 1946. In 1949 he organized the Dave Brubeck Trio, which expanded in 1951 to become the Dave Brubeck Quartet with the addition of alto saxophonist Paul Desmond. During the 1950s and 1960s Brubeck began experimenting with time signatures unusual to jazz, such as 5/4, 9/8, and 11/4. By 1959 he had recorded the first jazz instrumental piece to sell a million copies — Paul Desmond’s *Take Five* (in 5/4 meter) — which was released with his own *Blue Rondo à la Turk*. *Blue Rondo* itself represented a rhythmic experiment in jazz, as it is in 9/8 meter, grouped 2+2+2+3.

Sir André George Previn was born Andreas Ludwig Priwin in 1929 in Berlin, Germany. He entered the Berlin Hochschule für Musik at age six, but soon thereafter was forced to flee Germany with the rest of his family, first to France and then to the United States. The family settled in Los Angeles, where he quickly learned to use his talents as a pianist, playing accompaniments to silent films in a cult movie house and later becoming an orchestrator at the MGM film studios. This led to commissions for film scores, some of them based on Broadway musicals. In his maturity, Previn has turned more to compositions prompted by the talents of a particular artist. His *Piano Concerto* (1985) was written for Vladimir Ashkenazy, and he has also written a darkly intense cello sonata for Yo-Yo Ma (1993) and a violin sonata for Gil Shaham (1994). Previn’s most ambitious work to date is the opera *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1998), based on the Tennessee Williams play.

*Program notes by Stephen Ackert, head, Music Department,
National Gallery of Art*

Next Week at the National Gallery of Art

Ignacio Prego de Oliver, harpsichordist

Music by 16th- and 17th-century Spanish composers

Presented in honor of *The Sacred Made Real: Spanish Painting and Sculpture, 1600–1700* and in collaboration with the Embassy of Spain in honor of Spain's presidency in 2010 of the European Union

March 24, 2010

Wednesday, 12:10 pm

West Building, West Garden Court



**Stanford Chamber Chorale with
Chatham Baroque**

“The Passion in Music and Art”

Music by Johann Sebastian Bach

Presented in honor of *The Sacred Made Real:
Spanish Painting and Sculpture, 1600–1700*

Sunday, March 28, 2010

Preconcert talk in the West Building Lecture Hall at 6:00 pm

Concert at 6:30 pm in the West Building, West Garden Court

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed. Please be sure that cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices are turned off.

Please note that late entry or reentry of the West Building after 6:30 pm is not permitted.

For the convenience of concertgoers the Garden Café remains open until 6:00 pm for light refreshments.

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